

This invention is particularly useful for screening compounds by using PRO polypeptides or binding fragment thereof in any of a variety of drug screening techniques. The PRO polypeptide or fragment employed in such a test may either be free in solution, affixed to a solid support, borne on a cell surface, or located intracellularly. One method of drug screening utilizes eukaryotic or prokaryotic host cells which are stably transformed with recombinant nucleic acids expressing the PRO polypeptide or fragment. Drugs are screened against such transformed cells in competitive binding assays. Such cells, either in viable or fixed form, can be used for standard binding assays. One may measure, for example, the formation of complexes between PRO polypeptide or a fragment and the agent being tested. Alternatively, one can examine the diminution in complex formation between the PRO polypeptide and its target cell or target receptors caused by the agent being tested.

Thus, the present invention provides methods of screening for drugs or any other agents which can affect a PRO polypeptide-associated disease or disorder. These methods comprise contacting such an agent with an PRO polypeptide or fragment thereof and assaying (i) for the presence of a complex between the agent and the PRO polypeptide or fragment, or (ii) for the presence of a complex between the PRO polypeptide or fragment and the cell, by methods well known in the art. In such competitive binding assays, the PRO polypeptide or fragment is typically labeled. After suitable incubation, free PRO polypeptide or fragment is separated from that present in bound form, and the amount of free or uncomplexed label is a measure of the ability of the particular agent to bind to PRO polypeptide or to interfere with the PRO polypeptide/cell complex.

Another technique for drug screening provides high throughput screening for compounds having suitable binding affinity to a polypeptide and is described in detail in WO 84/03564, published on September 13, 1984. Briefly stated, large numbers of different small peptide test compounds are synthesized on a solid substrate, such as plastic pins or some other surface. As applied to a PRO polypeptide, the peptide test compounds are reacted with PRO polypeptide and washed. Bound PRO polypeptide is detected by methods well known in the art. Purified PRO polypeptide can also be coated directly onto plates for use in the aforementioned drug screening techniques. In addition, non-neutralizing antibodies can be used to capture the peptide and immobilize it on the solid support.

This invention also contemplates the use of competitive drug screening assays in which neutralizing antibodies capable of binding PRO polypeptide specifically compete with a test compound for binding to PRO polypeptide or fragments thereof. In this manner, the antibodies can be used to detect the presence of any peptide which shares one or more antigenic determinants with PRO polypeptide.

EXAMPLE 108: Rational Drug Design

The goal of rational drug design is to produce structural analogs of biologically active polypeptide of interest (*i.e.*, a PRO polypeptide) or of small molecules with which they interact, *e.g.*, agonists, antagonists, or inhibitors. Any of these examples can be used to fashion drugs which are more active or stable forms of the PRO polypeptide or which enhance or interfere with the function of the PRO polypeptide *in vivo* (*c.f.*, Hodgson, *Bio/Technology*, 9: 19-21 (1991)).

In one approach, the three-dimensional structure of the PRO polypeptide, or of an PRO polypeptide-inhibitor complex, is determined by x-ray crystallography, by computer modeling or, most typically, by a combination of the two approaches. Both the shape and charges of the PRO polypeptide must be ascertained

to elucidate the structure and to determine active site(s) of the molecule. Less often, useful information regarding the structure of the PRO polypeptide may be gained by modeling based on the structure of homologous proteins. In both cases, relevant structural information is used to design analogous PRO polypeptide-like molecules or to identify efficient inhibitors. Useful examples of rational drug design may include molecules which have improved activity or stability as shown by Braxton and Wells, *Biochemistry*, 31:7796-7801 (1992) or which act as inhibitors, agonists, or antagonists of native peptides as shown by Athauda *et al.*, *J. Biochem.*, 113:742-746 (1993).

It is also possible to isolate a target-specific antibody, selected by functional assay, as described above, and then to solve its crystal structure. This approach, in principle, yields a pharmacore upon which subsequent drug design can be based. It is possible to bypass protein crystallography altogether by generating anti-idiotypic antibodies (anti-ids) to a functional, pharmacologically active antibody. As a mirror image of a mirror image, the binding site of the anti-ids would be expected to be an analog of the original receptor. The anti-id could then be used to identify and isolate peptides from banks of chemically or biologically produced peptides. The isolated peptides would then act as the pharmacore.

By virtue of the present invention, sufficient amounts of the PRO polypeptide may be made available to perform such analytical studies as X-ray crystallography. In addition, knowledge of the PRO polypeptide amino acid sequence provided herein will provide guidance to those employing computer modeling techniques in place of or in addition to x-ray crystallography.

EXAMPLE 109: Ability of PRO Polypeptides to Inhibit Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor (VEGF) Stimulated Proliferation of Endothelial Cell Growth (Assay 9)

The ability of various PRO polypeptides to inhibit VEGF stimulated proliferation of endothelial cells was tested. Polypeptides testing positive in this assay are useful for inhibiting endothelial cell growth in mammals where such an effect would be beneficial, e.g., for inhibiting tumor growth.

Specifically, bovine adrenal cortical capillary endothelial cells (ACE) (from primary culture, maximum of 12-14 passages) were plated in 96-well plates at 500 cells/well per 100 microliter. Assay media included low glucose DMEM, 10% calf serum, 2 mM glutamine, and 1X penicillin/streptomycin/fungizone. Control wells included the following: (1) no ACE cells added; (2) ACE cells alone; (3) ACE cells plus 5 ng/ml FGF; (4) ACE cells plus 3 ng/ml VEGF; (5) ACE cells plus 3 ng/ml VEGF plus 1 ng/ml TGF-beta; and (6) ACE cells plus 3 ng/ml VEGF plus 5 ng/ml LIF. The test samples, poly-his tagged PRO polypeptides (in 100 microliter volumes), were then added to the wells (at dilutions of 1%, 0.1% and 0.01%, respectively). The cell cultures were incubated for 6-7 days at 37°C/5% CO₂. After the incubation, the media in the wells was aspirated, and the cells were washed 1X with PBS. An acid phosphatase reaction mixture (100 microliter; 0.1M sodium acetate, pH 5.5, 0.1% Triton X-100, 10 mM p-nitrophenyl phosphate) was then added to each well. After a 2 hour incubation at 37°C, the reaction was stopped by addition of 10 microliters 1N NaOH. Optical density (OD) was measured on a microplate reader at 405 nm.

The activity of PRO polypeptides was calculated as the percent inhibition of VEGF (3 ng/ml) stimulated proliferation (as determined by measuring acid phosphatase activity at OD 405 nm) relative to the cells without stimulation. TGF-beta was employed as an activity reference at 1 ng/ml, since TGF-beta blocks 70-90% of

VEGF-stimulated ACE cell proliferation. The results are indicative of the utility of the PRO polypeptides in cancer therapy and specifically in inhibiting tumor angiogenesis. Numerical values (relative inhibition) are determined by calculating the percent inhibition of VEGF stimulated proliferation by the PRO polypeptides relative to cells without stimulation and then dividing that percentage into the percent inhibition obtained by TGF- β at 1 ng/ml which is known to block 70-90% of VEGF stimulated cell proliferation. The results are considered positive if the PRO polypeptide exhibits 30% or greater inhibition of VEGF stimulation of endothelial cell growth (relative inhibition 30% or greater).

The following polypeptides tested positive in this assay: PRO200, PRO322 and PRO320.

EXAMPLE 110: Retinal Neuron Survival (Assay 52)

This example demonstrates that certain PRO polypeptides have efficacy in enhancing the survival of retinal neuron cells and, therefore, are useful for the therapeutic treatment of retinal disorders or injuries including, for example, treating sight loss in mammals due to retinitis pigmentosum, AMD, etc.

Sprague Dawley rat pups at postnatal day 7 (mixed population: glia and retinal neuronal types) are killed by decapitation following CO₂ anesthesia and the eyes are removed under sterile conditions. The neural retina is dissected away from the pigment epithelium and other ocular tissue and then dissociated into a single cell suspension using 0.25% trypsin in Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺-free PBS. The retinas are incubated at 37°C for 7-10 minutes after which the trypsin is inactivated by adding 1 ml soybean trypsin inhibitor. The cells are plated at 100,000 cells per well in 96 well plates in DMEM/F12 supplemented with N2 and with or without the specific test PRO polypeptide. Cells for all experiments are grown at 37°C in a water saturated atmosphere of 5% CO₂. After 2-3 days in culture, cells are stained with calcein AM then fixed using 4% paraformaldehyde and stained with DAPI for determination of total cell count. The total cells (fluorescent) are quantified at 20X objective magnification using CCD camera and NIH image software for MacIntosh. Fields in the well are chosen at random.

The effect of various concentration of PRO polypeptides are reported herein where percent survival is calculated by dividing the total number of calcein AM positive cells at 2-3 days in culture by the total number of DAPI-labeled cells at 2-3 days in culture. Anything above 30% survival is considered positive.

The following PRO polypeptides tested positive in this assay using polypeptide concentrations within the range of 0.01% to 1.0% in the assay: PRO200, PRO322, PRO540, PRO846 and PRO617.

EXAMPLE 111: Rod Photoreceptor Survival (Assay 56)

This assay shows that certain polypeptides of the invention act to enhance the survival/proliferation of rod photoreceptor cells and, therefore, are useful for the therapeutic treatment of retinal disorders or injuries including, for example, treating sight loss in mammals due to retinitis pigmentosum, AMD, etc. Sprague Dawley rat pups at 7 day postnatal (mixed population: glia and retinal neuronal cell types) are killed by decapitation following CO₂ anesthesia and the eyes are removed under sterile conditions. The neural retina is dissected away from the pigment epithelium and other ocular tissue and then dissociated into a single cell suspension using 0.25% trypsin in Ca²⁺, Mg²⁺-free PBS. The retinas are incubated at 37°C for 7-10 minutes after which the trypsin is inactivated by adding 1 ml soybean trypsin inhibitor. The cells are plated at 100,000 cells per well